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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 GABORONE 000068

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STATE FOR AF, AF/RSA, AF/S, AND PM; DOD FOR OSD/ISA/AF
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MCAP](#) [EAID](#) [BC](#)

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON U.S.-BOTSWANA SECURITY COOPERATION

REF: A. 08 STATE 123049 (NOTAL)
[1](#)B. 08 GABORONE 875 (NOTAL)
[1](#)C. 08 STATE 94292 (NOTAL)
[1](#)D. 08 GABORONE 577 (NOTAL)
[1](#)E. 08 GABORONE 566 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: DCM Philip R. Drouin; Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: Ambassador Nolan called on GOB Minister of Defence, Justice, and Security D. Ndelu Seretse on January 22 in Gaborone, as mutual schedules and travel had deferred this important meeting until now. While it was an initial courtesy call, we used the opportunity to do some business and revisit some of the security sector initiatives several of us in Gaborone and Washington had been working on a great deal in the last half of 2008, to find ways to "deepen the already strong security partnership" between our two countries and also to advance our security dialogue with the Southern African Development Community. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (S) The Ambassador opened by again commending Botswana for its principled stand and leadership within SADC concerning Zimbabwe's political and humanitarian crises. We also broached the longstanding idea of preparing a joint white paper on military-to-military cooperation and security assistance (Refs B and C), as an opportunity for us to reengage in a new year and under a new U.S. Administration. He also shared with the Minister a one-pager (prepared by our Office of Security Cooperation Chief, or OSC) highlighting existing areas of security cooperation, including augmented, end-of-year levels of International Military Education and Training (IMET) funding and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for FY2008. The newly-established State Partnership Program between the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) and the North Carolina National Guard is a timely initiative that will benefit Botswana greatly as it evolves. The Ambassador also briefed on the recently-issued Presidential Determination (PD) 2009-13, which finds that "the furnishing of defense articles and defense services to the Southern African Development Community will strengthen the security of the United States and promote world peace."

[1](#)3. (S) Minister Seretse warmly welcomed the Ambassador and expressed appreciation for his visit. As for our specific approaches noted above, the Minister seemed receptive without saying so explicitly, perhaps wishing first to review some of the papers we left off with his staff and superiors (such as President Khama or VP Merafhe). Both the Ambassador and Minister did agree, however, that it would be useful for us

to sit down together, continue the dialogue, and put out on the table for consideration -- without any commitment at this time -- such issues as military education and training (including ACOTA), joint exercises, procurement of defense materiel and equipment (including via the Excess Defense Articles program, or EDA), and contribution to/participation in peacekeeping and peace support operations. The Minister noted that, given the world economic downturn and Botswana's dependence on diamonds which are now generating less revenue, Botswana's defense budget will likely remain flat or decline in real terms for the foreseeable future (as no new initiatives or budget increases have been approved for 2009), so our interest in a deeper security partnership comes at good time. The Ambassador and OSC Chief explained that the path for Botswana to pursue and process EDA has been opened, but the GOB and the BDF need to come back to us with greater specificity to support their equipment requests.

14. (S) The Minister seemed less enthusiastic for the SADC angle at this juncture, suggesting instead this is a longer-term proposition. He said that the stand-up of the SADC stand-by brigade presents real capacity challenges, and it is probably better for the USG to go the bilateral route first. Whenever Botswana had pledged to do something for SADC-related military exercises or peacekeeping, it has had to foot its own bill. (Comment: We believe Seretse was insinuating that whenever a SADC member state offers to host an event, the host winds up absorbing the bulk of the bill -- such as when Botswana hosted Exercise Tlokwane with RECAP in 2006 within a SADC framework, the GOB and BDF got stuck paying for most of it. End Comment.) We all recognize too

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that Zimbabwe remains an impediment to better U.S.-SADC progress.

15. (S) Minister Seretse (also currently Acting Foreign Minister while MFA Skelemani is on travel to Turkey, Kenya, and Ethiopia for the AU Summit in Addis Ababa) will be accompanying President Khama to a pivotal January 26 Extraordinary SADC Summit in Pretoria on Zimbabwe (septel). The Minister encouraged the Ambassador and the Embassy to keep in touch with him and his staff. While contact and working-level dialogue with the BDF has proceeded well in the past and will no doubt continue, he stressed that it is essential that we keep his Ministry in the loop and engaged, given his and Khama's deep commitment to civilian authority and oversight of the military, which has worked so well throughout Botswana's history. We concurred and thanked the Minister for his time.

16. (S) Comment: This meeting was also an opportunity to introduce to the Minister and his private secretary the Embassy's (relatively new) OSC Chief and Pol/Econ Section Chief, who along with the DCM accompanied the Ambassador on this call. We hope this will enable us to continue to consult on security-related issues as 2009 unfolds and we have further working-level discussions with the Minister, his Office of the President staff, the MFA, and the BDF. The DCM, OSC Chief, as well as other OSC and DAO staff from Gaborone will attend the AFRICOM-sponsored Theater Security Cooperation Working Group (TSCWG) conference in Germany in early February, where with other attendees we can discuss and plan for emerging opportunities for deeper security sector engagement with Botswana and also SADC. End Comment.

NOLAN